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Security Council

Fifty-first Year

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3650th Meeting

Tuesday, 9 April 1996, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Somavía	(Chile)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Legwaila
	China	Mr. He Yafei
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Germany	Mr. Eitel
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Queta
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Wibisono
	Italy	Mr. Fulci
	Poland	Mr. Włosowicz
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Plumbly
	United States of America	Mr. Hume

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

96-85385 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: In accordance with the decisions taken at the 3648th meeting, I invite the distinguished Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan to take a seat at the Council table.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*I invite the representatives of Argentina, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to take the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Cárdenas (Argentina), Mr. Shah (India), Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Konishi (Japan), Mr. Thanarajasingam (Malaysia), Mr. Kamal (Pakistan), Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan), Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia), Mr. Çelem (Turkey), Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) and Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Security Council will now resume its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Mr. Wlosowicz (Poland): It gives me great pleasure indeed to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We are confident that your well-known diplomatic skills and devotion will greatly contribute to the work of the Council.

I would also like to ask Ambassador Legwaila to accept the assurances of my delegation's highest appreciation for the remarkable manner in which he presided over the Council in March.

We are very grateful to you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on Afghanistan. It is indeed a timely decision. We are glad that non-members of the Security Council will have a chance to present their views, too.

The situation in Afghanistan constitutes a serious threat to international security, and especially to stability in the whole region of Central Asia. Without normalization of the situation in that country, it will not be possible to defuse tensions which persist around its perimeter.

As a result of the long-lasting military confrontation, millions of people were forced to flee the country; hundreds of thousands were displaced internally.

The war had disastrous consequences for the country's infrastructure: schools, hospitals and highways were massively destroyed. A total of 1.5 million children died from malnutrition and lack of health care. Tens of thousands of persons were handicapped because of the war.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross Afghanistan is one of the most mine-infested countries in the world. All factions and parties involved in the Afghan conflict have resorted to mine warfare. It is indeed alarming that in 1995 alone 4,000 people were killed or injured by these deadly devices.

It is appalling that, despite the efforts of the Government in Kabul, Afghanistan remains a significant source of narcotics which rapidly spread all over the world. Under the conditions of ongoing internal conflict in the country, the war waged against narcotics cannot be successful.

The legacy of war continues to haunt the faction-ridden people of Afghanistan, who remain deeply divided. The warring parties have not renounced armed hostilities, and the situation continues to be extremely volatile, especially in the area of Kabul.

In December 1995, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. On 15 February 1996, the President of the Security Council was authorized to make a statement on behalf of the Council concerning the situation in Afghanistan. The statement, as well as the resolution, called for bringing to a halt the shelling of Kabul and for ending the blockade of access roads to the city through which humanitarian aid could be delivered to its inhabitants.

Since the issuance of that statement, the fighting has escalated, and reports on the intensification of hostilities have kept coming from Afghanistan. There has been an increase in civilian casualties. Three of the four roadways

leading to the city have been open only sporadically for humanitarian convoys. This situation arouses our concern.

It is our conviction that only dialogue and political negotiations could enable the Afghans to overcome their problems. Hence, we call upon the warring parties to renounce violence and to end the civil war ravaging the country.

We are against any political or military interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. We believe that only genuine national reconciliation and respect for the interests of all the ethnic and religious population groups of Afghanistan, as well as for the centuries-long tradition of Afghan statehood, can provide the real basis for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

We hold the view that Afghanistan is the common heritage of all Afghans and that the participation of all ethnic and cultural groups in the affairs of the country could only enhance the development and reconstruction of the nation. This would help solve problems the country is faced with and lead to a democratic society.

We believe that the international community can actively assist the Afghan people to achieve these goals, and we are willing to participate in the efforts aimed at the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We find the idea of an international conference devoted to Afghanistan appealing and certainly worth exploring.

Since the polyethnic, multinational country of Afghanistan needs the cessation of the civil war and national reconciliation, Poland supports international efforts — including those made within the framework of the United Nations — to achieve these goals.

We greatly value and respect Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri's efforts as Head of the Special Mission to facilitate national *rapprochement* and the reconstruction of Afghanistan, in particular by promoting broad-based political dialogue.

There is also a great role to be played in this process by regional organizations, such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. We hope that despite the enormous difficulties, such diplomatic efforts will bring the desired results.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Poland for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. Your rich diplomatic experience and well-known leadership skills guarantee that the Council will discharge its responsibilities this month in the best possible manner.

I also take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana for the remarkable efficiency that characterized his presidency of the Council last month.

At the outset, the delegation of Egypt wishes to reaffirm the importance of the principle of the Council's holding public meetings in order to familiarize itself with the opinions of the States concerned on the various subjects before it.

My delegation wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the latest developments in the situation in Afghanistan. The valuable United Nations efforts to find a peaceful settlement and in the field of humanitarian assistance deserve all our support and gratitude. In this regard, a special word of appreciation is due to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Mahmoud Mestiri, for its ongoing efforts on behalf of a just, comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the Afghanistan question that would achieve the desired objectives of the friendly Afghan people — namely, the restoration of peace and stability through national reconciliation — and ensure the preservation of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity.

The delegation of Egypt would also like to seize this opportunity to express its great appreciation for the continued and important role played by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its Secretary General, Mr. Hamid Algabid, in helping the United Nations promote a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan.

This morning we listened with great interest to the wide-ranging statement made by the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. This statement, together with a careful reading of the Secretary-General's report, can only deepen our pessimism about the situation in Afghanistan. The consequences of the human tragedy there have affected a large segment of the population. The warring parties show no genuine desire for a serious dialogue to achieve peace. All this casts a pall over the

prospects for the ultimate objective of a peaceful settlement and the way to achieve it.

We share the Secretary-General's grave concern over the failure of the warring parties to respond to his appeals and to those of his special representative for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the unconditional initiation of peaceful dialogue. Our concern is all the greater in view of the active preparations for a new round of fighting in and around the capital, Kabul.

In three paragraphs, the report refers to an important factor that not only increases tension between the warring factions but also complicates the peace process: increasing foreign interference, both political and military. The complete cessation of foreign interference, including an end to the provision of arms to the warring parties, would certainly help establish the climate necessary for the achievement of a comprehensive political settlement based first and foremost on the will of the people of Afghanistan.

The delegation of Egypt has supported and continues strongly to support ongoing efforts to establish the expanded mechanism, referred to by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/88 B, of a fully representative and broad-based authoritative council as the most appropriate formula for opening the way towards national reconciliation in Afghanistan. The mechanism should be mandated, *inter alia*, to perform the following tasks: first, the negotiation and supervision of an immediate cease-fire; secondly, the establishment of a national security force responsible for ensuring security throughout the country, supervising the collection of all heavy weapons in the country and stemming the flow of arms and related matériel to all parties; and, thirdly, the formation of an accepted provisional Government that could, *inter alia*, control the national security force pending the establishment of the conditions necessary for the holding of free and fair elections throughout the country, of course with the possibility of utilizing traditional decision-making structures.

If it is faithfully implemented and good will is evinced by all Afghan parties, this mechanism will put a halt to the bloodshed and the many years of civil war during which the Afghan people has been deprived of stability and peace. At present, the basic obstacle facing this mechanism is how to persuade the Afghan parties to accept it not in the manner perceived and desired by each faction separately, but rather from an inclusive and equitable viewpoint that transcends the individual interests of the parties in favour of the general and definitive interests of the people of Afghanistan as a whole.

The continuation of the armed conflict in Afghanistan has become in itself a serious threat to the stability of the region. Its repercussions have been felt beyond the region and now threaten the stability of many others. The Security Council issued a presidential statement on 15 February 1996 in which it expressed its deep concern that:

> "the continued conflict in Afghanistan provides fertile ground for terrorism, arms transfers and drug trafficking, which destabilize the whole region and beyond." (*S/PRST/1996/6, fifth paragraph*)

The Security Council must now discharge its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by adopting clear and well-defined measures to limit the spread of consequences of Afghanistan's instability to other regions pending the achievement of a comprehensive political settlement there.

The Secretary-General's report refers to the proposal to convene an international conference to address all aspects of the Afghan question. This proposal deserves careful consideration, since it could be an appropriate way to bring all the Afghan parties to the negotiating table. History provides many examples of other international problems in which the parties concerned were brought together to hold a dialogue for national reconciliation, as was the case in Lebanon, Cambodia and Yugoslavia.

But the convening of such an international conference would require a great deal of preparation by the Secretary-General's special representative, whose task would be to narrow the differences between the parties before the conference in such a way as to ensure the successful adoption of a comprehensive settlement plan. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the decision to move the special representative's headquarters to Jalalabad, which will increase his personal interaction with the events and enhance the parties' sense of the United Nations desire to reach a political settlement to their problem as soon as possible.

Resolution of this matter must be based on the presence of political will on three levels. First, the warring Afghan parties must demonstrate a will for peace. As the Secretary-General states in his report, the military option still seems the course of action preferred

by those parties. Secondly, there must be political will on the part of States which, through their support for one or another of the parties to the conflict, are contributing to the persistence of the conflict and complicating the settlement process. Finally, the international community must demonstrate political will; it must put this question on its list of urgent priorities.

There is no doubt that efforts by all States, individually, or through a group of friends of Afghanistan, or through any other grouping of interested States, if coordinated by the representative of the Secretary-General, would contribute to the achievement of a just and comprehensive settlement of this question.

My delegation hopes that this Security Council debate will provide the fresh impetus needed for the settlement of this question, beginning the process of adoption by the Council of effective measures to ensure serious steps to settle the problem.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Egypt for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I wish to begin, Sir, by expressing our deep satisfaction at seeing you presiding over the work of the Security Council this month, and by wishing you every success — success which I am sure we shall achieve under your leadership. We wish also to thank the delegation of Botswana, and Ambassador Legwaila personally for his excellent work as President of the Security Council last month.

My delegation is very pleased to see in this Chamber today the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

It is axiomatic to the Russian Federation's assessment of the situation in Afghanistan that the conflict there poses a threat to international peace and constitutes a major humanitarian tragedy. It will require extremely bold efforts to put an end to the armed conflict and to achieve a political settlement.

The protracted struggle between the Afghan groups has reached a stalemate. None is able to achieve the military advantage over the others that would guarantee its ability to govern the country by itself. But while there is no chance of a military solution to the situation, a political settlement to the conflict is not regarded by all the Afghan parties as the sole solution. Although there has recently been an increase in political contacts between various Afghan groups, we note with regret that at the same time plans are being laid to intensify the struggle and turn it into a religious war.

Russia is disturbed to see in Afghanistan a growing tendency towards separatism, ethnic segregation and confrontation. Everything possible must be done to stop this dangerous turn of events, which threatens the partition of Afghanistan and the deterioration of relations among States of the region. The United Nations should stand firm by its position of preserving the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

The ongoing civil war in Afghanistan poses a grave threat to the security and stability of other States. We are concerned to ensure the security of the borders between Afghanistan and countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and to make certain that the territory of Afghanistan is not used — as is now the case with respect to Tajikistan — to carry out acts undermining the security and stability of Afghanistan's neighbours.

The territory of Afghanistan continues to be the source of illegal exports of drugs and arms and a base for training terrorists who are then dispatched to crisis spots all over the world.

There are vast regions of Afghanistan where basically nothing is being done to protect the rights and freedoms of Afghan citizens or even of foreigners. This was demonstrated by the Taliban movement's seizure of a Russian aeroplane in August 1995 and its illegal detention of its seven crew members, for eight months so far. Despite the pleas of the General Assembly and the Security Council and the appeals of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and a number of individual States, the Taliban have refused to release these Russian citizens, and have made no secret that their detention is being used to exert pressure on Russia. Their plans have no prospect whatsoever of success. We view the situation as absolutely unacceptable, and expect that the international community will take further, decisive steps to ensure that the Taliban respect the rules of law, morality and humanity, and to secure the unconditional release of the Russian crew, in accordance with United Nations decisions.

We believe that the United Nations has a fundamental role to play in the process of achieving an Afghan settlement. It is essential to step up considerably the activities of the United Nations Special Mission to

Afghanistan. The Security Council could begin to prepare a draft resolution that would set out in detail a plan for United Nations action on Afghanistan.

We welcome the efforts along those lines by other authoritative international organizations to promote an Afghan settlement in close cooperation with the United Nations, in particular the efforts of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We support in principle the convening of an international conference on Afghanistan. It is clear that for this to be successful it is essential to secure prior consent from the Afghan parties to discuss their mutual relations and the future State structure of Afghanistan, in public and substantively.

Russia firmly adheres to its policy not to be drawn into the inter-Afghan fighting and expects that all other States will act in a similar way. Our country is prepared together with other members of the international community to promote a speedy, peaceful solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): At the outset, Sir, let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April. We look forward to benefiting from your vast experience and wisdom as you direct the affairs of the Council during your tenure. I should also like to pay tribute to last month's President, Ambassador Legwaila, for his outstanding efforts in guiding the Council through its agenda in March.

My delegation believes that the situation in Afghanistan clearly warrants the continued concern and attention of the Security Council, given the unabated military hostilities among the warring factions, the worsening humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, its geopolitical significance and its potential impact on international peace and security. In this context, today's open debate, initiated by the President of the Security Council, is both timely and crucial.

After reviewing the 3 April 1996 report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan, we cannot but express our disappointment and serious concern at the continuation of a brutal civil war that has been with us for 16 years now. This conflict is certainly not going to produce any winners. It has only brought and will continue to bring further devastation to an already war-ravaged and dilapidated country, and will bring additional tragic human suffering to the Afghan people.

We are particularly concerned by the assessment of the United Nations Special Mission that most of the warring factions in Afghanistan are still not genuinely interested in peaceful, political negotiation, but continue to seek a military upper hand at the cost of countless human lives and terrible economic and social consequences. The reported military preparations of the Afghan Government and the Taliban for a major battle for the control of Kabul are especially disturbing.

In addition to having a direct impact on the people and the country of Afghanistan, continued armed hostilities and a persistent anarchic environment over such a long period of time will also further such criminal activities as international terrorism and illicit trafficking in arms and narcotics. This undoubtedly undermines the stability of the entire region and beyond.

My delegation looks to Mr. Mahmoud Mestiri, Head of the Special Mission, for his continued leadership and vital role in pursuing efforts towards national reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Mr. Mestiri's extensive, ongoing consultations and meetings with Afghan factional leaders and senior officials of other interested Governments should be commended and further encouraged. We reiterate our full support for the strengthened role of the United Nations Special Mission and look forward to any measurable progress towards a cessation of armed hostilities between the warring parties and, ultimately, a comprehensive political settlement.

We strongly urge all the Afghan parties concerned to cooperate fully with the United Nations Special Mission, lay down their arms and join together in peaceful dialogue, in particular with a view to establishing a fully representative and broad-based authoritative council without delay.

We should also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and express our sincere appreciation for the outstanding efforts of humanitarian agencies, in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross. They have been providing essential humanitarian relief to the Afghan civilian population under extremely trying circumstances.

In this regard, we also urge the parties concerned not to hinder the movement of these vital humanitarian supplies.

Another major area of concern identified in the Secretary-General's report is that of escalating foreign interference in Afghan affairs. This unwelcome involvement, both military and political, only complicates the peace process and intensifies the military confrontation and animosity among the warring factions.

In this context, we agree with the Secretary-General's view that this question should be addressed at the international level, and we therefore believe that the idea of convening an international conference on this matter deserves further attention.

It is our conviction that national reconciliation and rehabilitation in Afghanistan cannot be imposed by the United Nations or any other benign outside force. It is ultimately up to the parties themselves to ease the suffering of the Afghan people and begin to rebuild their shattered country.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Martínez Blanco (Honduras) (*interpretation from Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the current month. In view of your skill and your high degree of professional and diplomatic experience, we are fully convinced that under your leadership the work of the Council will be successful. We also wish to convey our appreciation to the delegation of Botswana, and in particular to Ambassador Legwaila, and our congratulations on the successful work accomplished during the month of March.

Afghanistan is suffering an interminable civil war that has undermined its economy and brought its population to the limits of poverty and hunger. For the last two years the country has been tormented by fighting between Afghan factions and by foreign interference, and the diplomatic efforts of the international community have not so far been able to secure a cease-fire or bring about a substantial exchange of views between the Afghan Government and the armed opposition in order to solve this the problem.

Despite the efforts of the United Nations special envoy to reach an agreement between the parties on the composition of a provisional council as a step towards the establishment of a broad-based representative Government, and despite the fact that the Afghan Government, the Taliban movement and the Dostum faction have expressed their readiness to enter into talks, the prospects for peace and stability in Afghanistan seem to be fading, as the Afghan leaders continue to resort to military solutions in trying to achieve their objectives.

My delegation regrets the loss of human life that the present conflict is causing in Afghanistan. We are concerned that the city of Kabul has been under bombardment by the Islamic Taliban movement in a new attempt to capture the city and overthrow President Rabbani. My delegation believes that recourse to force is not the only option for finding a solution to the Afghan conflict. The parties should opt for peaceful means and, as soon as possible, enter into substantive talks with a view to a broad political settlement enabling them to restore peace and leading to national reconciliation.

In addition to the dialogue which must take place between the parties, it is important for the Government of Afghanistan to hold talks with the Governments of neighbouring States in order to promote peace and regional stability. The territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Afghanistan must be respected, and interference in its internal affairs must cease.

An unprecedented human rights catastrophe continues to unfold in Afghanistan. Arbitrary and deliberate executions, illegal detention, torture and rape are carried out by practically all armed political groups. As there is no civilian political structure with sufficient authority, nor a judicial system in most of the country, these groups are acting with total impunity. Thousands of people have been illegally detained for political, religious or ethnic reasons and have been put in prisons run by the Mujahidin factions. Hundreds of people are missing, and tens of thousands of civilians have been killed or wounded as a result of deliberate artillery attacks on residential areas. More than 3 million Afghans have left the country as refugees as a result of the civil war or in an attempt to escape the systematic violations of human rights.

My delegation believes that the international community must not allow political events in Afghanistan to continue to aggravate the human rights situation in the country. We appeal to the Afghan parties to respect the human rights of the civilian population and strictly to observe international humanitarian law.

Finally, the current state of civil war and political instability in Afghanistan has led to a widespread feeling of insecurity throughout the country. This feeling is strengthened by the steady flow of arms and ammunition from other countries to the Afghan factions. It is therefore appropriate to recall here the need to meet the aims set out in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly dealing with illicit arms trafficking.

The resolution of the present conflict in Afghanistan requires major efforts. My delegation reiterates the need for the parties to show a clear desire for peace and national reconciliation and that they cooperate with the United Nations Special Mission to achieve this end.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Representative of Honduras for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency, and to commend the Permanent Representative of Botswana on the high calibre of the presidency under him and his colleagues last month.

I should like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative of holding this public debate on Afghanistan, thus enabling us to hear the opinions of the interested States, which we will take into account when the Council considers the Secretary-General's report.

Since the last time the Council took up the question of Afghanistan, the situation there has deteriorated without let-up. The Secretary-General has informed us that the Afghan capital was heavily bombarded in March: several offensives and counter-offensives have been launched around the city, and we know that military preparations are under way in several other parts of the country.

In such circumstances, it is unfortunately impossible to avoid restating the obvious, which is that no military solution is possible in Afghanistan. The only effect of these military attacks is to increase the suffering of the civilian population just that much more. All we can do, therefore, is once again demand — as the Council did in its presidential statement of 15 February 1996 (S/PRST/1996/6) — that the hostilities be ended.

However, I would like to lay stress on an immediate requirement, which is a humanitarian obligation: the obligation to allow free access to Kabul for humanitarian assistance, for emergency foodstuffs. In this connection, allow me to pay a tribute to the humanitarian organizations — several of which, of course, are French in origin — that are serving in Afghanistan, and which continue, despite the pressure and the difficulties, to carry out their mission of providing aid and succour.

What is to be done? In 1994, the General Assembly charged a Special Envoy, Mr. Mestiri, with promoting dialogue between all the factions in Afghanistan, and many of us here know Mr. Mestiri well and value him highly. Mr. Mestiri has gone to Afghanistan on many occasions; he has established contacts with all the Afghan parties. He has done what he could to convince those he has talked to to accept the idea of a dialogue to include all the parties. He is continuing that task right now, and has also — and this is a good thing — set up shop in Afghanistan proper.

The Security Council has in the past on several occasions come to the aid of the Special Envoy in his efforts to restore peace to Afghanistan. Today, when the circumstances belie the existence of any improvement, it seems to us that it is particularly necessary for the Council to renew that aid and support the proposals Mr. Mestiri is making, which proposals all have to do with the idea of restoring and nourishing a dialogue between all the parties.

If a return to peace is to last, a government must be established that is accepted by all the various components of the country, and, it would appear, all those components are in favour of this idea, which must therefore be made a reality. Not one of the major communities in Afghanistan, either ethnic or religious, must be left out of the dialogue.

This, I think, is an idea that should be borne very much in mind as the Special Envoy, with our aid, seeks agreement on his ideas for a meeting: all the communities must participate in this kind of dialogue, and this is the necessary condition for maintaining the country's independence and territorial integrity and ensuring that Afghanistan — and I know that many members here have sympathy and affection for that country — enjoys stability at home, which stability is itself vital for the stability of the whole region.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of France for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): I shall begin by congratulating you, Mr. Somavía, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. Your broad experience, your command of the issues, your keen insight and very prestigious academic background are solid guarantees of the success of our work this month. At the same time, I should like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Legwaila, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, for his excellent, lively and successful leadership of the Council last month.

The picture of the situation in Afghanistan — a country that, as the representative of France has just said, we Europeans all love very much — that emerges from the Secretary-General's recent report and from Mr. Gharekhan's briefing of Thursday, 4 April is unfortunately a matter of serious, deep concern. It is a bleak picture, characterized by a military and diplomatic stalemate. There seems to be only the firm intention of pursuing a military solution at all costs.

The capital, Kabul — the beautiful city of Kabul — is virtually under siege. Last winter, it suffered a disastrous blockade of all commercial and humanitarian shipments. It continues to be the target of almost daily shellings. Moreover, it is threatened by a new attack that the Secretary-General rightly calls

> "a futile and reckless military exercise". (*A/50/908, para. 11*)

This attack will not decide anything, but will lead only to further bloodshed for innocent Afghan civilians. The situation is also precarious in the eastern part of the country as a result of the threats to attack Herat being made by the former governor of the city.

In the midst of all this, no direct, constructive dialogue is even in sight. The opposition forces themselves are in disarray amongst themselves as well, as is shown by the recent talks in Islamabad in which the Taliban refused to participate.

In these circumstances, Italy continues fully to support the difficult, patient work of mediation of the special representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mestiri. Allow me to recall that a statement of support for Mr. Mestiri was issued recently by the European Union. His task, as I said earlier, is far from being easy, but his recent return to the region, with the assistance of some new advisors, augurs well — at least, that is our sincere hope. However, we must never forget that the last word is with the Afghan parties themselves. Unless they show the specific will to end the conflict and to replace the logic of force with the logic of peace and dialogue, any efforts at mediation will be useless. Thus we appeal to them to collaborate in the creation of an adequate mechanism for the transfer of power, in the form of

> "a fully representative and broad-based authoritative council",

as indicated in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 50/88 B. The Secretary-General suggests that an international conference on Afghanistan could be conducive to this goal. The Italian delegation supports this proposal.

The Secretary-General's report, and the recent briefing by Ambassador Gharekhan, describe the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan as very serious, if not alarming. The international community can and must intervene; its willingness to do so was made clear in the resolution adopted in the fall by the General Assembly. With its recent declaration, the European Union also urged all the parties directly concerned to end the hostilities immediately and to allow the free passage and distribution of humanitarian aid to the Afghan civilian population.

In our view, another question of fundamental importance is economic rehabilitation and reconstruction, after the immense harm caused by a very long and ruthless conflict. However, the flow of international aid to reconstruct and to relaunch the economy cannot begin without a solid and credible political agreement opening up reasonable prospects for the return of peace to Afghanistan. For the international community it is equally important that there be renewed respect for human rights. Many — too many — violations of basic human rights have occurred in this long, drawn-out conflict.

Like the rest of us, who have long lived in a world of not so much independent as inter-dependent nations, Afghanistan is not an entity isolated from the rest of the world. In particular, it is a country that is part of a delicate and complex regional reality characterized by other conflicts, like the one in Tajikistan, for example. It is in the interest of the neighbouring countries to abstain from any interference that might help feed the conflict, and to strive instead to patiently convince the various Afghan factions that there can be no military solution, and that they must settle their differences through peaceful means. A peaceful Afghanistan on the way to

economic recovery — an Afghanistan that is ready and able to reabsorb the millions of refugees that have resettled in neighbouring States — would represent a factor of stability, which is in the interests of all, starting with its neighbouring countries.

The Afghan conflict is a legacy of the cold war, a legacy, however, that unlike similar cases — such as the conflict in Cambodia — has found in its complex historic, ethnic and cultural reality sufficient fuel to outlive the cold war. This is what makes it so necessary for all those involved in the crisis to fully understand the responsibility they have to reverse the situation, to renounce egoism and divisiveness, to search in good faith for a solution compatible with the interests and the needs of all. To be helped by the international community, Afghanistan must first and foremost help itself.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Italy for his very kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Eitel (Germany): Like those delegations that have spoken before me, and probably like those that will speak after me, I want to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of your high office. Your wealth of ideas and your readiness to take initiatives and to shoulder responsibility are well known, and that is why we look forward to working under your leadership.

Let me add a word of thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana. I must say that we enjoyed his good-humoured and effective guidance. However, speaking of Ambassador Legwaila's effectiveness, I am afraid that I would not be quite honest if I did not add a word of caution, if not criticism.T h e Botswana coat of arms bears the ominous word "pula", which Ambassador Legwaila himself was good enough to translate for me. It means "May it rain upon you", which seems to be, in his country, a wish full of the best intentions. I hope Ambassador Legwaila will forgive me if I have to state that in his month of presidency — and well into yours, Mr. President — he simply overdid it. We at the German delegation are at present examining how to deal — possibly in the Open-ended Working Group — with this new phenomenon of Security Council outreach.

Coming now to the agenda proper, Mr. President, I should like to commend your initiative to have an open Security Council debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I welcome the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and the Afghan Permanent Representative here at our table.

Germany enjoys a long history of friendly relations with all segments of Afghan society. We share with many other countries a sense of the urgency of the situation, a sense that something must be done to put an end to this terrible conflict. With many others, we have tried to alleviate the plight of the civilian population through humanitarian aid.

Sixteen years of war have placed a heavy burden on this country and its people. I hope that today's debate will send a signal of support to the people of Afghanistan — a signal that the international community does care and that it will continue to work, through the United Nations, for the establishment of peace and stability in this country.

The situation on the ground in Afghanistan is frustrating. So far, all international peace efforts have been in vain. An end to all this bloodshed is not yet in sight. This conflict does not concern Afghanistan alone. It could easily develop into a threat to the peace and stability of the whole region.

What are we to do?

The international community has made a commitment to Afghanistan. This commitment is contained in the General Assembly resolution on Afghanistan adopted by consensus on 19 December 1995. What we are to do is, essentially, to put our consensus back to work, with the aim of ensuring this resolution's full implementation. The resolution is very clear, both on the aims of international peace efforts in Afghanistan and on the ways the international community wants to pursue to achieve these aims. Quoting from it, we can reaffirm today our strong commitment to

> "national reconciliation in Afghanistan and to its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity" *(General Assembly resolution 50/88 B fifth preambular paragraph)*

as well as the readiness of the United Nations to assist the people of Afghanistan in their efforts to achieve national reconciliation.

The General Assembly resolution gives the United Nations Special Mission an unequivocal mandate to facilitate national reconciliation through the creation of a

transitory mechanism, transfer of power and an immediate and durable cease-fire. The Head of the Special Mission, Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri, and his staff have already invested enormous efforts to work with the parties towards achieving these goals. We would like to thank them for their tireless work.

Germany is happy to have been able to provide one of the four political officers who were recruited to strengthen the Special Mission, in conformity with the General Assembly resolution. He left for the region in late February, has already spent 10 days in Kandahar and has also travelled with Ambassador Mestiri to Kabul. We are ready to continue to give our full support to the United Nations Special Mission and to cooperate with other interested delegations in working for its success.

Today we want to encourage Ambassador Mestiri and his staff to follow their course in trying to bring about an agreement on the composition of a transitory mechanism, usually referred to as the "authoritative council". The composition of this council is certainly one of the central questions that must be solved, if a viable peace process is to be created.

At the same time, we agree with others that the Special Mission should be encouraged to somewhat broaden its approach by also seeking solutions to other questions that have to be addressed within the framework of the Commission's mandate. We are convinced that such a broader approach may open up new opportunities for success in the work of the Special Mission. In addition, we are also prepared to consider all additional measures that may benefit the peace process in Afghanistan as outlined in the General Assembly resolution.

Should the United Nations feel that in order to achieve its goals in Afghanistan new forums are required for bringing together all the parties, we are ready to support the idea of a United Nations-sponsored meeting or conference on Afghanistan. Obviously, such a meeting would have to be well prepared and should include not only all the parties to the conflict, but also a certain international element. We have full confidence in the United Nations Secretary-General to decide if and when the time for such a meeting may have come.

While the international community, through the United Nations General Assembly, has assigned to the United Nations the pivotal role of helping to bring about peace and stability in Afghanistan, the United Nations cannot achieve this goal on its own. Quite to the contrary: the United Nations can only facilitate the efforts the parties must make to achieve a lasting and peaceful solution to their differences. The United Nations Special Mission constitutes in itself an offer by the international community. It is up to the parties to accept or decline this offer. So far we do not see a wholehearted and unequivocal acceptance. Should this perception continue, the United Nations may face a situation in which it will have to reconsider its commitment.

Besides the parties to the conflict itself, the countries of the region also bear a special responsibility. We are alarmed by reports of continuous and even increasing foreign interference in Afghanistan: foreign interference by more than one country, benefiting more than one Afghan party. The aim of the United Nations peace efforts is to facilitate a peaceful solution to the conflict, thereby also ensuring the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. Foreign interference — for example, through the shipment of arms — is thwarting this aim.

Only if all those concerned fully cooperate do we stand a chance of putting an end to this terrible conflict. The United Nations Special Mission must be encouraged to intensify further its efforts to fulfil its mandate. All States concerned must refrain from interfering in Afghanistan and must instead put their whole weight behind the United Nations peace initiative. But, first and foremost, the Afghan parties must rebuke the deadly logic of war and embark on the road towards peace.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I thank the representative of Germany for his kind words addressed to me.

I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Chile.

In the first place, I wish to express my satisfaction over the interest in and support for the initiative of holding this orientation debate on the serious crisis in Afghanistan. The positive response of a large number of delegations is clear proof that the international community is concerned about the continuing suffering of the Afghan People.

Furthermore, Chile considers it extremely timely and necessary to be able to hear in this open debate the comments, opinions, suggestions, ideas and points of view of other delegations, including those of many States of the region, non-members of the Council which are

affected in a variety of ways by the Afghan crisis. We believe that we are thus making a contribution to promoting peace initiatives and resolving a conflict in a Member State, and also better meeting the common desire to have a Council which works in increasingly transparent ways. We think that we may also in this manner achieve the legitimacy and support which all decisions of the Council should have.

In recent years, despite the enormous efforts made by the United Nations and other States, as well as by the Afghan parties, we note with regret that the warring factions in Afghanistan seem to continue to prefer the military option.

Resolutions of the General Assembly have repeatedly remained unimplemented, and in recent months we have continued to be distressed by the continuation of military activity in Kabul and other areas, resulting in death and destruction and seriously endangering regional peace and stability.

My delegation wishes to repeat the importance it attaches to the fact that those States that bear the heaviest responsibility for resolving the conflict should take the necessary measures to promote peace in Afghanistan. Ending the flow of arms, ammunition and other military supplies is indispensable for promoting an end to conflict.

We believe that it is urgent to put an immediate end to undue interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Similarly, the commitments undertaken by the present Government should be fully respected. At the same time, we feel that the efforts of the parties, including those of all Afghan representatives and of the States most closely concerned, should focus on the search for an immediate and lasting cease-fire agreement. We feel that it would be useful at a later stage to consider convening an international conference to address all the Afghan problems comprehensively.

Along with all this, the continuation of development programmes aimed at rehabilitating economic activity and the growing reintegration of people to productive tasks is of special importance. This seems all the more necessary when we consider the disturbingly high levels of drug production in Afghanistan, which has a negative impact on the peace process, since it is an agent for destabilization in neighbouring countries and throughout the region.

Lastly, Chile wishes to pay a very sincere and heartfelt tribute to the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and other non-governmental organizations that, in very difficult circumstances, are striving to ease the suffering of the people most affected. We appeal for the free flow of humanitarian assistance to Kabul.

Along with other delegations here, we also commend and fully support the initiatives carried out by the Special Mission representing the Secretary-General in the region.

We know, however, that no progress in the Afghan situation is possible without the resolute cooperation of all parties to the conflict. We appeal — and this will seem unnecessary, but I believe that here in the Security Council we need to emphasize these points — to the Government and factions to think first and foremost of the people of Afghanistan. There can be no agreement without the participation of everyone, but neither can there be a political agreement unless the well-being of the people of Afghanistan is made the paramount objective. The search for power, territorial control and victory over another merely increases suffering; the Afghan leaders themselves know that as well as anyone. Having heard and read the positions of the Afghan leadership, one wishes there were more affection, more love, more sensitivity towards people, towards the innocent human beings whose fates depend exclusively on their geographic location and who are not consulted.

This debate conveys a clear message of the Council's concern over and interest in the Afghan situation — and we would wish to see the Afghan leaders show the same interest and the same concern towards their own people — and of firm support for the peace process. We appeal in the strongest terms to the parties to respond positively so that, beginning now, a future of peace, progress and stability, so sorely needed by the Afghan people, can begin to be built.

I now resume my function as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the

presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. I am confident that under your able leadership the Council will deal with its agenda items effectively and efficiently during the current month. I would also like to pay tribute to Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana for the excellent manner in which he guided the work of the Council last month.

Over a long period of time, the question of Afghanistan has been on the agenda of many meetings of the United Nations, and many resolutions have been adopted. However, the conflict in Afghanistan and the suffering of the Afghan people continue. We hope that today's meeting can help create an atmosphere conducive to a greater involvement of the international community in Afghanistan in terms both of finding a peaceful solution to the conflict and of responding to the humanitarian needs of the Afghan people, who have been suffering for the past 17 years and are in dire need of peace, stability and development.

Today, the situation in Afghanistan is a matter of concern and a source of anguish. The country has been going through a very destructive and merciless war, resulting in a great number of deaths and injuries among innocent civilians, the displacement of thousands of people and the widespread destruction of property. Heavy fighting continues to inflict suffering on innocent civilians, particularly on the civilian population of Kabul, despite repeated calls by the international community, including the Security Council, for the cessation of hostilities and an end to the bombardment and shelling of populated areas. As the Secretary-General states in his latest report:

> "the situation in Kabul continues to be critical, especially as regards the supply and availability of food and fuel. Recent surveys show that large sections of the population that were not previously considered vulnerable now have extreme difficulties in meeting their basic needs." (*A/50/908, para. 7*)

The Afghan parties, who were once united in their struggle against foreign occupation, have not been able, unfortunately, to preserve their unity and work towards the reconstruction of their country after so many years of destruction. The Afghan parties should stop fighting and agree on a peaceful settlement so that the Afghan people can work towards peace and development.

Having a long border with Afghanistan and sharing linguistic and religious commonalities with the people of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been gravely concerned about the situation in that country. Having witnessed up close the suffering of a neighbouring country over a long period of time, we cannot be indifferent to the fate of the Muslim people of Afghanistan, and we have therefore taken various measures to alleviate the suffering of the people of that country. We have hosted more than 2.5 million Afghan refugees, whom we have protected with a very high standard of treatment, despite the fact that international assistance provided to cover the expenses has not been proportionate to the size and magnitude of the problem. We hope that all Afghan refugees can return to their homeland voluntarily as soon as possible. Needless to say, international cooperation and assistance to facilitate this process are vital.

Furthermore, my country has done its best through various means to help the Afghan people. Building hospitals and medical centres to treat patients free of charge, offering educational programmes for Afghan students, training Afghan medical groups, implementing a continuous plan of child vaccination, providing necessary facilities for orphanages and providing food and non-food assistance are but some of our ongoing activities aimed at alleviating the suffering and hardships of Afghan people. But the situation is worse, and more difficult, than one can imagine. Very basic rights of the Afghan people have been endangered during the years of conflict, and in some areas of the country the incidence of disease and malnutrition has already reached alarming proportions. To deal with these unfortunate conditions, an enduring commitment on the part of the international community to provide both humanitarian assistance and financial support is of the utmost necessity.

In the political field, we have also spared no effort to help various Afghan parties to set aside their differences for the sake of all Afghans, and for the sake of peace and stability in the region. We have repeatedly urged them to agree on a durable cease-fire and to seek a negotiated peaceful solution acceptable to all. The people of Afghanistan are very tired of the fratricidal war and the bloodshed. Therefore, there is no justification whatsoever for rejecting a cease-fire and insisting on continuing the armed hostilities. We firmly believe that the people of Afghanistan have every right to fully determine their own destiny and that they are capable of doing so. While respecting and supporting the right of Afghans to choose their own future, our policy has been focused on maintaining contact with the Government and with all Afghan groups and using every opportunity to promote peace. As in the past, the Islamic Republic of

Iran will continue to cooperate with its neighbours to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan. We also continue to support the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri. Moreover, the role of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in this regard should also be commended. We are of the view that close coordination and cooperation among the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and neighbouring countries can best serve the peace process in Afghanistan. We once again reiterate the importance of safeguarding the territorial integrity, sovereignty and national unity of Afghanistan.

The international community should be called upon to be more attentive to the needs of the Afghan people. The United Nations can play an important role in this regard. The humanitarian needs are so enormous and the magnitude of the destruction is so high that more concerted action is required. In this context, an area to which not enough attention has been paid is the international contribution to the reconstruction process in those areas of Afghanistan where there is no fighting. This by itself would give Afghans an incentive to set aside their arms and resolve their differences peacefully. The United Nations can help propel the peaceful settlement process also through, *inter alia*, utilizing the experiences of others, including those of neighbouring countries. There is no need to emphasize the fact that no plan should be imposed upon the people of Afghanistan, who have been sensitive throughout their history to foreign interference.

Finally, we hope that with the sincere support of the whole international community the Afghans can soon arrive at an immediate and durable cease-fire and an acceptable transitional government. For its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue to play its role in the process of bringing peace and normalcy to Afghanistan.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): Permit me at the outset to offer my congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency for the month of April. Please be assured that Japan stands ready to extend its full support as you continue to lead the work of the Council. I also wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, the representative of the Republic of Botswana, for the excellent manner in which he guided the Council's business during the month of March.

Japan has been closely following recent developments in Afghanistan. In the light of information it has received from the survey teams it dispatched to the country and from other sources, it is particularly concerned by the human suffering resulting from the ongoing fighting, and by the danger that the civil war could spill over and threaten the stability of the entire region.

My Government shares the views contained in the Secretary-General's recent report to the General Assembly (A/50/908). Japan believes that the conflict should be resolved through the framework of the United Nations, and it continues to support the Organization's mediation efforts to help bring lasting stability to Afghanistan and to the region.

It should be stressed, however, that the destiny of Afghanistan can only be determined by the Afghan people themselves. It is they who must decide on the elements to be included in a peace settlement, such as the form which their future government is to take and the means for ensuring domestic security.

The parties in conflict must lay down their arms and go to the negotiating table as early as possible. As a country that maintains good yet neutral relations with those parties, Japan believes it can play a useful role in helping to build the necessary confidence among them to create an environment conducive to the achievement of peace. Specifically, Japan is in a position to facilitate talks between the United Nations and the various Afghan parties as well as between the United Nations and the neighbouring countries. On various occasions, the parties have expressed to Japan their strong hope that the United Nations will play a more active role to achieve peace in Afghanistan, and that Japan will further contribute to efforts for a political settlement.

The Government of Japan thus intends to develop its contacts with the parties concerned. In addition, a Government mission is now holding talks with a number of concerned countries. Japan also hopes to send a political officer to work for the United Nations Special Mission when an understanding is fully reached with the Secretariat on the *modus operandi* for that officer.

Japan would like to call attention to the view expressed in the Secretary-General's report that arms exports and other forms of foreign interference are prolonging the civil war. It is essential that the countries concerned halt such assistance immediately and rally behind the United Nations peace efforts. The Secretary-General's proposal that an international conference be convened to address this problem as an integral part of the overall Afghanistan problem is worthy of consideration.

In this context, my Government has followed with interest the question of an arms embargo against Afghanistan. Japan wishes to contribute as much as possible to efforts within the framework of the United Nations in such a direction, keeping in mind that before any decisions on concrete measures are taken, the efficacy of such measures would require careful study.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Japan for his words of support addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): As this is the first time I have addressed the Security Council under your presidency, Sir, let me congratulate you on your assumption of your high office. I have no doubt that under your talented and able guidance, the Council will be able to fulfil its responsibilities successfully during the current month. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my admiration to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the affairs of the Council last month.

Today's open debate on Afghanistan in the Security Council takes place after a long lapse of seven years. Its purpose is obviously to identify the root cause of the continuing conflict and the outlines of possible solutions.

In order to understand the continuing conflict in Afghanistan, we unfortunately have to look back at the tragic events faced by this war-torn country over the last 17 years. During the decade-long Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the country was completely devastated. Large portions of the country were bombed and torched; nearly 1.5 million Afghans died resisting the occupation; 7 million or more were displaced from their homes, most of them being forced to take shelter in the two neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan, and an estimated 30 million unmapped mines were inhumanely scattered.

Once the occupying forces had withdrawn, the various Afghan factions fell out with each other in their struggle to fill the vacuum. The billions of dollars worth of arms and equipment left behind in Afghanistan by the occupying forces provided a much too ready and constant source of ammunition for this continuing conflict.

The Government and the people of Pakistan obviously viewed these developments with great concern. As a neighbour with deep historical and cultural links with Afghanistan, and as one that had stood shoulder to shoulder with the people of Afghanistan in their travails, Pakistan was shocked by this new conflict between brothers. In our opinion, the people of Afghanistan were entitled to the fruits of their long struggle, and to be able to concentrate all their energies on the tasks of reconstruction after their prolonged suffering. The consistent position of the Government of Pakistan on this fratricidal conflict has always been that only a broad-based interim mechanism, in which all factions would participate, could pave the way to a democratic government that alone could provide the necessary durable fabric for this multi-ethnic country. Durable peace requires abandoning the politics of domination and exclusion and achieving a genuine national reconciliation among all the political, ethnic and various other segments of Afghan society.

It is also evident that the people of Afghanistan are fed up with factional strife and earnestly dream of resuming normal life in conditions of peace and security. It is therefore incumbent upon the United Nations and the international community to assist them in this regard.

A comprehensive framework for restoring peace in Afghanistan, with the real commitment and support of the international community, must be delineated. It should have political, economic and humanitarian components and should be implemented with vigour and determination.

The international community has identified the essential political elements for peace in Afghanistan. These are reflected in the resolution adopted unanimously by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

Much of the strife in Afghanistan can be attributed to the absence of legitimate governance. Legitimacy flows not from military diktat or the use of weaponry

against innocent civilians, but from the confidence and support of those civilians. Attempts by one group or another to claim legitimacy on the basis of lapsed agreements have been a core factor in, fuelling the factional strife. The General Assembly therefore clearly stipulated as essential the transfer of power through the urgent establishment of a fully representative and broad-based authoritative council.

The United Nations Special Mission has made commendable efforts to deal with this issue. Regrettably, these efforts continue to be frustrated by lack of political will and remain hostage to the changing political and military configurations in Afghanistan.

The massive infusion of weapons and funds from abroad for various political and military factions compounds the problem and weakens the resolve on the part of the protagonists to seek national reconciliation. Unfortunately, many political factions have been reduced to mere pawns in a chess game that has broader regional and international dimensions.

Pakistan, which stood steadfast with the Afghan people in their heroic struggle for the liberation of their country, provided succour and support to millions of Afghan refugees and suffered most from the war in Afghanistan, is today being portrayed by some as playing politics in Afghanistan. Those who accuse us of interfering in Afghanistan know full well that we have scrupulously refrained from supporting one faction or another. These allegations against us are concocted in a transparent attempt to cover up the massive weapon supplies from certain quarters or are an expression of disappointment on finding no such support from Pakistan.

More fundamentally, the trumpeting of these allegations is a naive attempt to explain away the untenable situation that these factions find themselves in, due to a complete lack of popular support from the Afghan people.

The culture of money, weapons and drugs has been deliberately cultivated in order to foist on the people of Afghanistan military diktat by self-seeking mercenaries who have shown by their actions that they care little about the Afghan nation or about Islam.

It is indeed ironic that the nominal central authority physically controls only 5 of the 32 provinces, yet, despite its long, self-extended term, it has not been able to obtain the allegiance of those over whom it arrogates to itself the right to govern. On the other hand, the Taliban control more than half the country and are locked in a struggle with the nominal central authority. A quarter is controlled by General Dostum, and other parts by smaller factions. The intellectuals, the technocrats, the refugees and the vast majority of common Afghans view with disgust this outrageous power play, which has done great discredit to the pride of the Afghan nation.

Those opposed to the nominal central authority question its legitimacy. Central to this is the fact that, under the Afghan accords of March 1993, the term of the government in Kabul expired in June 1994.

These accords were arrived at by a process of intra-Afghan dialogue. The dialogue has since been interrupted. The Security Council must lend its fullest support to the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to revive the intra-Afghan political process. A representative gathering of the Afghan leaders should be convened under United Nations auspices, or under the joint auspices of the United Nations and neighbouring countries, with a view to launching a credible process involving the transfer of power to a fully representative, broad-based government. Pakistan stands ready to support such a process, which is the only way to address the issues.

Such a gathering could also address the question of the induction of a neutral security force and the demilitarization of Kabul and Afghanistan as important steps which should proceed simultaneously with the formation of a broad-based government.

We also favour a complete ban on weapons and arms supplies to the warring factions in Afghanistan. The imposition of a general arms embargo by the Security Council would convey the right signal to the Afghan warlords of the international community's determination to bring this intolerable situation to an early end.

The Council should also consider imposing an embargo to interdict, effectively, the plane-loads of ammunition being flown into Afghanistan each day from various destinations. Monitoring the arms and air embargoes would require an effective mechanism, which we hope it would be possible for the United Nations to set up, in cooperation, possibly, with the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The idea of an international conference on Afghanistan has been talked about. In our view, it would be premature to convene an international conference on

Afghanistan at this stage. As experience and history indicate, no solution from outside can be imposed on the Afghans. A durable solution can be evolved only by the Afghans themselves. A representative gathering of the Afghans under the auspices of the United Nations, assisted if necessary by the Friends of Afghanistan, would appear to us to be a more feasible means of launching the intra-Afghan peace process.

The other elements of a comprehensive approach require equal attention: we need a generous and sustained international commitment to the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, and the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. We also need such assistance for the refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and we need to make effective plans for their rapid repatriation to a peaceful Afghanistan.

We fully appreciate the sufferings of the Afghan people, of whom more than 1.5 million still reside in Pakistan as refugees. We are continuing to extend all possible assistance to these Afghan refugees. So far, we have spent around 10.5 billion rupees from our own modest resources on their care and maintenance. We have also allowed unimpeded passage of food items across our borders into Afghanistan. We have facilitated ongoing World Food Programme, United Nations Development Programme and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) operations for relief assistance in Afghanistan. The ICRC has so far airlifted a total of 900 tonnes of food supplies from Peshawar to Kabul.

We have seen the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, dated 3 April 1996. Pakistan fully supports the efforts of the Special Mission of the Secretary-General to Afghanistan to facilitate national rapprochement and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has welcomed this open debate in the Security Council. However, we are convinced that we have not heard the true voice of the Afghan people, who alone can decide on their future. Until and unless we do so, our discussions will continue to be ill-informed and incomplete. We have to find ways and means to hear the views of all the factions in Afghanistan, without being inhibited simply by rules and regulations.

We hope that this debate in the Security Council will not only help sensitize the international community about the sufferings of the people of Afghanistan, but will also give a major impetus to the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Representative of Pakistan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Representative of Argentina. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

I welcome him to the Council, where he himself sat not long ago.

Mr. Cárdenas (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me first of all to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you preside this afternoon over the Council's deliberations; I should also like to thank the delegation and the Permanent Representative of Botswana for the work they carried out during the month of March and for the wisdom that is always characteristic of them.

A very few months ago, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, for whom my delegation has very special respect, in submitting the traditional report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the state of the world's refugees for 1995, told us that:

> "One of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century will be to ensure that peoples, wherever they may be in the world, can enjoy security and freedom; security against armed conflicts, violence, human rights abuses and poverty; freedom to achieve their own personal potential, participate in the government of their countries and express their individual and collective identity."

Naturally, we agree with her. But if we take an honest look at the map of our world today and search for a spot where there is not even a minimum of security and where freedom is only an aspiration, or perhaps a still-distant dream, that place, unfortunately, is Afghanistan.

The people of Afghanistan has suffered more than 16 years of pointless, uninterrupted violence, the result of a war in which the major Powers were not uninvolved. One even intervened directly; others did so through proxies, in ways that do not relieve them of moral responsibility and which, in any case, were typical of the so-called cold war. Unfortunately, the war in Afghanistan

continues, and there are third countries that are apparently not completely uninvolved in the violence that still grips that country. They should now unite in an effort for peace.

In addition to being so harshly afflicted, the people of Afghanistan is, and has been for too many years now, one of the poorest in the world, in spite of being a hard-working and industrious people. Life expectancy at birth is only 43 years; the literacy rate is around 20 per cent; infant mortality in Afghanistan is one of the highest in the world. Sadly, the only things that abound in that country are weapons and ammunition.

Almost 3 million Afghans continue to live outside their country as refugees, while 1 million persons are internally displaced. This is the largest group of refugees in the world. In the relative haven of the camps, they find what they do not have at home: mainly security, but also water, schools, health services, electricity and, for some, even jobs. These are all pieces of a whole that represents the minimum necessary for human dignity.

With such a large number of refugees, it is clear that the question of Afghanistan has a significant impact on neighbouring countries and on the region as a whole. However, very little is said these days about that country, as if the prevailing state of affairs there were inevitable or could not be remedied — as if all of a sudden Afghanistan had faded into the background in the agenda of urgent matters to resolve in the area of peace and security.

Only a few days ago, in the 1996 edition of the very useful annual report of the United States Mission on world humanitarian emergencies, the situation in Afghanistan was one of only three crises to be described as "intense", together with those in Burundi and Sierra Leone. The report adds that the latter is now improving since the recent elections held there and the negotiations that have just started between some of the parties. Furthermore, it describes what is occurring in Afghanistan as one of the worst humanitarian situations in the entire world. Today, the nearly 1 million inhabitants of Kabul lead a precarious existence, trying to meet their minimum needs, threatened all the while by the advance of the so-called Taliban.

The real victims of this situation — the civilian population of Afghanistan — are surrounded by this wall of silence, which all too frequently in our world hides from view the tragedies of the neediest. It would seem that some progress has been made recently, in particular in a few rural areas; while this may be encouraging, it is clearly not enough.

The most urgent thing is peace, or at least the cessation of hostilities. Otherwise it is not possible to think seriously of reconstruction, nor is it possible to dream of the return of refugees, or of reconciliation, tolerance and diversity. We believe that the time has come to take serious steps on the ground and in neighbouring countries that could lead to a break in the violence. In this respect, we are among those who believe that it would be beneficial to hold a conference at the highest level, with the participation of all the States that in one way or another are linked to the crisis, in order to form what we might call a "coalition for peace", capable of collectively supporting a peace strategy, or perhaps even a renewed group of friends, or contact group, to try to generate greater political force and assist in the efforts undertaken by the Secretariat of our Organization.

The presence of the United Nations in the area is, for now, our only reason for hope, but it must be more active and probably establish priorities. Its true chances of success depend not only on the behaviour of those fighting on Afghan soil but also on the conduct of those who support them, arm them and, ultimately, use, or have used, them. That international presence must be supported without delay, in every possible way, and here the vision and the actions of the major Powers and the neighbouring countries are, in our view, crucial.

Without a basic, minimum agreement among all, at least with respect to the first steps that should be taken towards peace, success will be much more difficult to achieve. Promoting this quest for agreement and then reaching agreement — these are the tasks that fall to this Organization. Furthermore, they cannot be postponed, given the magnitude of the tragedy.

The emergency issues for Afghanistan are clear.

First of all, an attempt must be made to effectively impede and control the flow of arms and military supplies, and the related financial flows; otherwise, violence and destruction will continue. In addition, today we must try to avert attacks on Kabul and Herat, which would seriously aggravate the crisis. At the same time, we must endeavour to ensure respect for human rights and humanitarian law. The abuses, arbitrary acts and excesses of all kinds that are occurring in this area are a main cause of the instability afflicting Afghanistan. They also represent a serious practical difficulty that hinders the work of those who are generously trying to help.

We must put an end once and for all to unilateral steps and activities that compromise the territorial integrity of Afghanistan, such as the building of roads or communications systems. Next, we must start to define, with the participation of the parties to the Afghan conflict, a strategy for reconciliation and the urgent needs of reconstruction. It is the inescapable duty of the international community to do everything in its power to urgently facilitate peace, and it is the particular responsibility of those who at one point seemed to be adding fuel to the fire to cooperate today in efforts to restore peace.

In a climate of terror or of misery, peace is not easy to achieve; but even if it were to be achieved, it could not be sustained. This is what history teaches us time and time again. It is therefore time to begin negotiating efforts, bearing in mind, as appropriate, the time-frames that sometimes result from political developments affecting the various players or parties concerned. But we should not wait for that to occur before moving forward, since, despite the silence that surrounds this issue, the affliction that violence is bringing down on the people of Afghanistan has not ceased; it continues relentlessly. This current situation of impotence, in a world that talks on and on about all kinds of globalization, should shame us all. The time has come to act concretely and collectively to try to globalize peace, and Afghanistan should be one of the first steps in that direction.

The question of Afghanistan, in our view, has been around for too long. If we do not persist in our efforts and if, as donors of humanitarian assistance to that country, we suffer "donor fatigue" — understandable as that may be — the attainment of peace will continue to be impossible.

That is our view of the substance of the Afghan question, whose resolution should not continue to be postponed.

I should now like briefly to refer to the Council's procedure today — a formal meeting at which States not currently members have the opportunity to be heard on matters before the Council. We welcome the reasonably frequent holding of such meetings. They are extremely important, in my delegation's opinion, in the attempt to consolidate the current trend towards the greatest possible transparency in the work of the Council. This approach, which has strengthened over the last two years, has already made a difference in the Council's work.

These meetings, together with institutionalization of meetings with countries contributing troops to peace-keeping operations, a new system, but one which is now established, with its own identity, are evidence of a fresh outlook on how the work of this body should be carried out — in an integrated manner, not separate from the Member States, as a whole, which are now heard and have their views known.

If this were not so, we would continue to read or hear about past events when we were perhaps in the grip of a kind of petty and short-sighted philosophy that resulted in views not being listened to. More seriously still, information essential for taking decisions in this Council was filtered or perhaps even cut out.

Such is the case, for example, of some information in volume II, recently published, of "The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience" by the Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda. That work, edited by David Millwood, was printed in Odense, Denmark, in March 1995. The possibly serious concern aroused by a reading of that work is that it seems just possible that at some point a cable was sent to the Secretariat containing essential information. That information was never shared with the members of the Security Council, which would certainly have been done if such a cable actually existed.

We recall that our repeated requests for information at that time provoked suggestions, which we did not agree with, that some of us wanted to "micro-manage" from the Council the crisis on its agenda. Of course, that was not so.

There is another matter to consider. If there had been an institutionalized mechanism for dialogue between the Council and the Secretariat, and the troop-contributing countries, the information in question, if it existed, might have been passed to all those of us who were then members of the Security Council.

My delegation therefore welcomes meetings like this, which allow the Council to hear the views of Member States on the various issues before it.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Argentina for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is Mr. Engin Ansay, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to whom the Council extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure at the 3648th meeting. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are confident that your rich experience and known professional and academic skills will serve you well in the successful discharge of the complex task currently facing the Security Council.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, Ambassador Legwaila, for his able performance in steering the work of the Council during the month of March.

On behalf of the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), I am privileged, once again, to address the Security Council on an issue of critical importance to our two Organizations. Let me say that on this issue the United Nations and the OIC have a commonality of views, and both have cooperated readily in seeking ways to reduce tensions and, as far as humanly possible, bring peace and stability to the Afghan people and to the region.

Since the liberation of Afghanistan and following the collapse of the Najibullah regime in April 1992, a peaceful transfer of power to the Afghan Mujahideen constituted a principal objective of all OIC action on the Afghan question. It was in this spirit that the agreements signed by the leaders of the Afghan Mujahideen on 24 April 1992, on the formation of their new administration, and the installation, four days later, of an interim government in Afghanistan, were welcomed by the OIC with great hopes and expectations. Regrettably, these expectations proved to be short- lived, as fighting erupted among different Mujahideen groups in and around Kabul, bringing with it immense loss of human life and treacherous conditions for the surviving population. Among other measures, the launching of an ambitious OIC programme of reconstruction assistance that was being developed in mutual cooperation between the OIC and the Islamic Development Bank for the newly resurrected State of Afghanistan, was seriously hampered by these events.

In the period that followed, all of us in the OIC observed with distress a rapid deterioration in the Afghan situation. Our Organization seized every opportunity to play a constructive role in the matter. My Secretary General, Dr. Hamid Algabid himself, appealed to the parties concerned to cease hostilities and seek a peaceful solution through dialogue. In a statement on 25 January 1993 he welcomed the initiative of His Majesty King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan, urging the Mujahideen leaders to respond positively to that initiative. The Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ambassador Bakr, visited the region and extended the OIC's full diplomatic and political support to the Saudi initiative. This initiative was reinforced by that of the then Prime Minister of another member State of my Organization, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, resulting in a fruitful meeting of all Afghan Mujahideen leaders in Islamabad on 7 March 1993. The Afghan Peace Accord, concluded that day, was ratified on 12 March 1993 at Makkah Al Mukarramah, in the presence of King Fahd and the Prime Minster of Pakistan. My Secretary General was there, too, in support of that initiative.

Under article 10 of the Afghan Peace Accord, the OIC was given the responsibility, together with the representatives of the Afghan parties, to monitor the cease-fire and the cessation of hostilities in Afghanistan. This was consistent with the mandate given by the Sixth Islamic Summit, which called for an active role for the OIC in the solution of the Afghanistan problem. My Organization welcomed this call and serious consultations were undertaken at the highest levels to define its monitoring role and to detail the modalities for making it operational. Plans were also being considered by the Islamic Development Bank for dispatching teams of experts to Afghanistan to evaluate the country's reconstruction and development needs.

The Twenty-first Islamic Conference of Foreign Minsters, held in Karachi, Pakistan, in April 1993 had, among other things, appealed to member States and the international community in general to provide generous humanitarian and financial assistance to Afghanistan and to the Afghan refugees awaiting repatriation from Pakistan and Iran. All subsequent Islamic Conferences of Foreign Ministers and the Seventh Islamic Summit have consistently upheld this principled position.

These and other earlier supportive moves, however, were stopped in their tracks as fresh intra-factional

fighting broke out in Afghanistan in May 1993. Since then the hostilities have never completely ceased; rather, they have frequently gained in intensity, thus causing much human suffering, including loss of lives, and hampering measures that would have fostered stability and paved the way to the social and economic development of the country. Throughout this period, the OIC has continued in its efforts to counsel the exercise of restraint and to advocate discussions and dialogues among all warring factions so that peace may be attained and maintained on mutually agreeable terms.

I have to emphasize here that these initiatives have been and are being undertaken not in isolation, but in harmony with the United Nations peace-making efforts in Afghanistan. Constant contacts between the two Organizations at the appropriate levels, including the levels of the respective executive heads, are being maintained, and the OIC's complementary role *vis-à-vis* that of the United Nations in seeking a peaceful solution of the Afghan problem is being pursued. My Secretary General has continued his own travels to Afghanistan and other affected areas, engaging in dialogues with the leaders concerned. These have been followed by the visits of his Special Representative to the area, in which the Afghan leaders have indicated their interest in seeing the implementation of the Afghan Peace Accord once favourable conditions are attained.

To facilitate this task, the OIC, in cooperation with and with the most appreciated support of the Government of Pakistan and in full agreement with all Afghan parties, established a permanent representation for Afghanistan in Islamabad.

The Secretary General of the OIC, on the basis of the consultations of his Special Representative with the relevant Afghan parties and the follow-up reports from the OIC Permanent Representative for Afghanistan, has proposed that once a durable cease-fire has been established the OIC could examine the possibility of convening a gathering of all parties concerned at a suitable place, preferably Jeddah, and at an appropriate time, initiate an inter-Afghan process for resolving their problems and for defining the direction of efforts to establish durable peace in Afghanistan. Simultaneously, the OIC would do its best to ensure that emergency relief and humanitarian supplies reached the war-affected people in Afghanistan.

I spoke a little while ago of the fact that the OIC's initiatives are in harmony with the United Nations peace-making efforts in Afghanistan. This is fully reflected in the framework of consultations that are being pursued between the two Organizations and between the representatives of each with the leadership of all Afghan factions in the country.

At this stage in my intervention, I should mention the Proximity Peace Talks held in Teheran, Iran, from 29 November to 7 December 1994, among the Afghan parties, with the participation of the Special Representative of the Secretary General and the OIC Permanent Representative for Afghanistan and in the presence of the representative of the United Nations. These talks, which were conducted on the initiative of the Government of Iran, were devoted to a comprehensive exchange of views on ways to establish a cease- fire, a mechanism for the transfer of power, a new interim Government and a permanent political infrastructure in Afghanistan. The continuing in-fighting in Afghanistan, however, has militated against giving practical effect to whatever understanding may have been arrived at in these talks.

Within the framework of OIC initiatives, I had then the privilege of leading OIC delegations to Afghanistan on two different occasions in 1995, once in June and July and again in September in my additional capacity as chairman of the OIC mission for Afghanistan. Prior to my first visit of June and July, Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri, special representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Afghanistan affairs, had visited upon our invitation the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah and engaged in constructive talks with our Secretary General and other senior OIC officials. In my own consultations with Mr. Rabbani, Commander Masoud and other leaders in Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat and Kandahar, and particularly in Mazar-i-Sharif, where I observed a genuine spirit of cooperation and support for the United Nations/OIC initiative, as well as in Islamabad, where I had detailed discussions with all authorities concerned and with Mr. Mahmoud Mestiri, the OIC's complementary role to that of the United Nations in seeking a peaceful solution of the Afghanistan situation was clarified once again.

However, unlike some other peace initiatives, ours did not provide for a prearranged agenda for the initial peace talks. Rather, it advocated the convening of a preparatory meeting of representatives of all the leaders and political factions of Afghanistan, in addition to some selected Afghan independent personalities, to meet at an agreed time in Jeddah to discuss freely and, hopefully, agree on an agenda for peace and on the modalities for

its implementation, all by and among the Afghans themselves, with absolutely no outside interference of any kind whatsoever. This meeting would, however, enjoy all the cooperation and support of both the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference and, after agreeing on a course of action, could be assisted, at the invitation of participating Afghans themselves, by the representatives of some neighbouring and other countries directly concerned in the implementation of future actions. These issues were also the subject of most recent discussions between the Secretary General's Special Representative and the parties concerned in Afghanistan earlier this year.

It is gratifying that General Assembly resolution 50/88, unanimously adopted on 19 December 1995, expresses its appreciation for the efforts of the OIC in support of the United Nations Special Mission and the engagement of my Organization in Afghanistan, in coordination with the United Nations, with a view to achieving a just and lasting political settlement. The entire membership of the OIC fully supports and endorses this resolution.

I take the liberty of reiterating that the OIC proposals and initiatives, fully consistent with this resolution, provide for no outside interference of any kind whatsoever. As can be deduced from my own talks with the leadership of the various Afghan factions, including the Kabul authorities, these proposals would be agreeable to them, given some time, patience and perseverance. We believe that these should be seriously considered in all relevant forums and supported.

It is in this context that we welcome the Secretary-General's latest report, contained in document A/50/908 of 3 April 1996, and especially his recommendations and conclusions concerning alternative ways of seeking a satisfactory solution to the Afghan question. We believe that our proposal regarding the convening of an intra-Afghan meeting under joint United Nations/OIC sponsorship, to be joined at a later stage by other countries directly concerned, leading to the emergence of a fully representative, broad-based authority for Afghanistan, provides a viable alternative.

In conclusion, we would reaffirm the general principles enunciated in General Assembly resolution 50/88 as well as in the Secretary-General's recent report to which I have just referred, and the resolve of the OIC to continue, in close cooperation with the United Nations, its efforts to assist the people of Afghanistan in their endeavours to find a fair and lasting solution to their longstanding, painful predicament.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ansay for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): I wish first of all, Sir, to congratulate you heartily on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We know you as a talented diplomat with long and rich experience brilliantly reflected in many ways, including in your prominent role at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. This all augurs well for the success of the Council's work. We wish also warmly to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana, on his remarkable work as President of the Council last month.

I take this opportunity to convey to the Government and the people of the United States the deep sympathy of the Tunisian Government in connection with the recent aeroplane accident in Croatia, which took the life of the United States Secretary of Commerce.

My delegation is pleased that the Security Council is meeting officially to debate the situation in Afghanistan. This demonstrates its interest in that question and in the need to restore peace to Afghanistan. As we all know, the situation in Afghanistan is tragic and has given rise to widespread concern.

The Afghan State and its people have been sorely tried for years by the ravages and destruction of a fratricidal war, which has taken the lives of defenceless civilians, displaced the inhabitants and forced them into exile and has paralysed the political life of the country, ruined its economy, jeopardized its sovereignty and posed a constant threat to its independence, unity and territorial integrity — quite apart from the risks the situation poses for stability and peace in the region.

Unfortunately, there is not a glimmer of encouragement on the horizon. To the contrary, the fighting continues, and indeed is intensifying. In recent months, Kabul, besieged from all quarters, has been under continuous indiscriminate bombardment that has inflicted considerable losses on the population, who lack the basic necessities of life.

It is regrettable that no heed has yet been paid to the frequent United Nations and Security Council appeals to put an end to the hostilities and peacefully settle the disputes between the Afghan factions.

Over the past two years, the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Ambassador Mestiri, has spared no effort in its attempts to convince the leaders of the warring factions to accept unconditionally an immediate cease-fire and begin a dialogue leading to negotiations aimed at a peaceful, lasting settlement in Afghanistan. The refusal of the factions to lay down their weapons, and their determination to pursue the military solution they believe possible have thwarted the mediation efforts of the United Nations Mission. Foreign interference and the supply by other States of weapons, ammunition and money to the factions have further complicated the Afghan problem.

Quite apart from our great concern at the deterioration of the situation, it is clearly urgent to take action to end the vicious cycle of violence in that stricken country and to launch a process of dialogue among Afghans, making it possible to reach a settlement of the political crisis, to restore peace and stability and to rebuild Afghanistan's political, economic and social institutions.

General Assembly resolution 50/88 B, adopted by consensus on 19 December 1995, once again spelled out the stages that could lead to a negotiated settlement of the Afghan crisis: the urgent establishment of a fully representative and broad-based authoritative council with authority, *inter alia*, to negotiate and oversee an immediate and durable cease-fire; to create and control a national security force to provide for security throughout the country and oversee the collection and safeguarding of all heavy weapons in the country, and to stop the flow of arms and of equipment related to arms production to the parties; and to form an acceptable transitional government which could, *inter alia*, control the national security force until conditions for free and fair elections are established throughout the country.

That resolution also set out other conditions that would promote a negotiated settlement, and called upon all States

> "(*a*) To respect Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, strictly to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and to respect the right of the Afghan people to determine their own destiny;
>
> "(*b*) To take all steps necessary to promote peace in Afghanistan, to stop the flow of arms and of equipment related to arms production to all parties and to put an end to this destructive conflict". (*General Assembly resolution 50/88 B, para. 9*)

In this connection, I would also recall General Assembly resolution 50/70 J, on measures to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional arms, which invites Member States

> "To take appropriate and effective enforcement measures to seek to ensure that illicit transfers of arms are immediately discontinued". *(General Assembly resolution 50/70 J, para. 1 (a))*

We reaffirm our total support for the purposes of General Assembly resolution 50/88 B, and stress the importance and the necessity of their prompt implementation.

A lasting settlement of the Afghan crisis can be possible only with negotiations on the transfer or sharing of power. In this context, the Security Council should urge the warring parties in Afghanistan to renounce violence and the use of force, to agree to an immediate cease-fire and to consent to settle their differences by peaceful means: dialogue and negotiation, which are the only way to guarantee a viable, lasting solution that will spare the afflicted Afghan people and enable Afghanistan to recover peace within the framework of a freely gained national consensus.

If this dialogue among Afghans is to be irreversible and credible and if it is to make possible the implementation of clearly defined stages of a settlement as set out in the relevant United Nations resolutions, it should be subject to no preconditions by any party, faction or individual involved.

Clearly, if the United Nations Special Mission is to complete its mandate to establish peace and national reconciliation in Afghanistan the warring parties must cooperate with it fully and unconditionally. Otherwise, the parties would be frustrating the wish of the United Nations and the international community to help them and to provide the Afghan people with the assistance it so sorely needs.

The Security Council should reaffirm its full support for the United Nations Special Mission and for

Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri. The United Nations Special Mission should be afforded all necessary means to continue its efforts to bring to the negotiating table the main warring parties and factions — the Kabul Government, the Taliban movement and General Dostum, leader of the Uzbek militia — in the hope that other Afghan parties and individuals will join the talks as soon as possible.

While supporting the unflagging efforts of the United Nations Special Mission, we urge it to explore other ways and means, possibly including, as a last resort, the convening of an international conference on Afghanistan.

I would like to pay tribute to the sustained efforts of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its Secretary General, Mr. Hamid Algabid, to bring harmony and peace back to this country.

The renunciation of force by the Afghan parties, their firm and serious commitment to a negotiated solution to the crisis, and their full and wholehearted cooperation with the United Nations Special Mission, are as necessary for the achievement of a lasting settlement as the cooperation of neighbouring and other countries.

We emphasize the importance of a sustained dialogue between the Government of Afghanistan and those of neighbouring countries as another essential factor for peace in Afghanistan. This would promote mutually beneficial cooperation and thereby contribute to strengthening the foundations of peace and stability in the region.

In the meantime, the international community must continue generously to provide humanitarian and economic aid to Afghanistan, and to strengthen it, especially in order to sustain and consolidate the peace efforts.

This is the main thrust of the action that we believe is needed in order to bring peace to Afghanistan. The road to peace has been charted. It is now up to the Afghan parties to set about the task resolutely, with the necessary goodwill; to the neighbouring and other States to give their full support; and to the Security Council — the body which bears the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security — to act urgently, within the scope of its authority, and to launch, through Ambassador Mestiri's mission, the process of national reconciliation in this country and give hope back to a people in distress.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Tunisia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Turkmenistan. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): I congratulate you, Sir, on occupying the very responsible post of President of the Security Council this month, and wish you every possible success. I also thank the Ambassador of Botswana for the skilful way in which he conducted the work of the Council last month

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak at today's meeting of the Security Council, to share our views on the situation in Afghanistan, and to explore ways and means of finding a political settlement to the conflict. The Government of my country cannot fail to be concerned by the many years of conflict in a neighbouring country with which we share an 800-kilometre boundary. We are linked by ties of good-neighbourliness which extend into the distant past. Political, trade, economic and cultural links have always been of great significance for the peoples of our countries.

There are approximately 1 million of our ethnic compatriots in the territory of Afghanistan. We have lost many of the Turkmen — *Dzhigit* — in this senseless Afghan war. The pain of these losses will never be erased from our hearts, and for that reason we are very much affected by the tragedy of the Afghan people. The continuing loss of human life, including women and children, and the tremendous destruction, have compounded the sufferings of the people and caused great damage to the country. Thousands of people have become refugees.

In strict accordance with our strategic foreign policy of neutrality, Turkmenistan maintains excellent relations with all of the main Afghan military-political groups, particularly with those which control the provinces bordering our country. At the same time, Turkmenistan does not maintain so-called special relationships with any of the Afghan groups. Nor does it supply that country with weapons, ammunition or other strategic material which could be used to further protract the conflict. As neighbours, we can indeed feel the "hot breath" of the Afghan conflict and the problems which accompany it. It prevents the realization of one of our major economic potentials: the delivery through Afghanistan of sources of energy.

The ongoing conflict in that country has exacerbated the problems of the illegal drug and illegal weapons

trades, which directly affect the interests of the national security of Turkmenistan and other States in the region.

The destabilizing effect of the protracted Afghan conflict has also affected the situation throughout the region, in particular the prospect of a speedy inter-Tajik settlement, which has been the subject of ongoing talks under the aegis of the United Nations in the capital of my country, Ashkhabad.

I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/50/908) to the General Assembly, entitled "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security". His evaluation of the situation in Afghanistan, as well as the conclusions reached in the report, are, unfortunately, expressed in a minor key. A military solution to the problem continues, apparently, to be the preferred scenario for the parties in conflict. The continuing destructive intervention from outside has complicated an already difficult situation. We wholeheartedly support the idea of resolving internal conflicts through negotiation and consensus, and wish the Afghan people peace, unity and tranquillity. We are opposed to any outside intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

My Government is convinced that the time has now come to step up collective efforts by all States that are anxious to bring about a speedy and effective settlement of the situation in Afghanistan. Naturally, a coordinating role in this matter should be played by the United Nations. The President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, proposed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the initiative of convening an international conference in the near future, under the aegis of the United Nations, on the question of Afghanistan. Participants would include the leaders of the main military and political groups in neighbouring and other interested States. Such a conference could give a powerful impetus to an inter-Afghan settlement and help to produce a broad international consensus on ways to achieve peace in Afghanistan. It would also help to neutralize destructive outside factors.

In that context, we took note of the idea put forward today in the Security Council that an embargo be placed on arms deliveries to Afghanistan. Naturally, such an embargo should be covered by an appropriate control mechanism. It would be a great honour for neutral Turkmenistan to host such a conference in our capital of Ashkhabad, where we would provide every possible condition for success.

I hope that the discussion of the Afghan problem in the Security Council will make it possible for the efforts of the international community to focus on practical peace-keeping steps which will shortly bring peace to Afghanistan and strengthen the stability of our region.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Turkmenistan for her kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. I am confident that, under your able guidance, the Council will carry out its deliberations in a successful manner. I would also like to pay a tribute to Ambassador Legwaila, the Permanent Representative of Botswana, for the exemplary manner in which he conducted the work of the Council in the month of March.

This special meeting of the Council on the question of Afghanistan is, in our view, a timely and opportune occasion for generating renewed interest on the part of the international community in the deteriorating situation in that war-stricken country. Indeed, more than three years have gone by since encouraging changes took place in the political situation in Afghanistan, after a long and painful struggle for the liberation of that country. The process that led to the establishment of an interim government in Kabul at that time had given us hope that, at long last, all Afghans would put aside their differences and start the process of reconciliation. We had hoped that a broad-based reconciliation process including all groups and segments of the Afghani nation might start.

However, we have been greatly dismayed at the resumption and continuation of the armed conflict, which has taken an enormous humanitarian toll, totally devastated the economic infrastructure and caused a deepening refugee crisis affecting not only Afghanistan but also its neighbouring countries. The continuing hostilities have also endangered the process of political normalization. The tireless efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Mestiri, have yet to yield results in the direction of a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

From the very beginning, Turkey has been an ardent supporter of the Special Mission's peace efforts, and we continue to support its wide-ranging consultations with the Afghan parties and its proposals to bring an end to the factional fighting, to set in motion the process of political reconciliation and to embark on the challenging task of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Our position on the conflict in Afghanistan can best be summed up as follows.

Firstly, we attach great importance to the unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. We believe that this is the only basis on which a just and lasting solution can be built.

Secondly, the international community has time and again expressed its firm position on how best to address the situation in Afghanistan, most lately through General Assembly resolution 50/88 of 19 December 1995, whereby it requested the Secretary-General, *inter alia*, to continue his efforts to facilitate national reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan, in particular by ensuring the transfer of power. The resolution also envisaged the urgent establishment of a fully representative and broad-based authoritative council as the proper mechanism for achieving this objective. It is our considered opinion that this resolution contains the fundamental elements of a general framework for a prospective solution in Afghanistan, and it enjoys the widest possible international support.

Thirdly, the current fighting in the country should come to an end once and for all. Political stability and a cessation of armed hostilities are indispensable if the reconstruction of Afghanistan is to take place.

Fourthly, all parties to the conflict should strictly respect the provisions of international humanitarian law. Millions of innocent civilians have lost their lives; millions have been maimed. This suffering must stop.

We therefore once again appeal to all the conflicting parties in Afghanistan, especially the leaders of the warring parties, to agree, finally, on a national reconciliation process that would lead to the restoration of a fully representative, broad-based government, and appeals also for them to support the international community's efforts in this regard.

In this connection, we attach particular importance to the constructive role that the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) has been playing to help bring about national reconciliation between the parties in Afghanistan, and we fully support its efforts. The efforts of the OIC are being conducted in close cooperation and coordination with the United Nations Special Mission, and they are complementary in nature to those of the United Nations.

The senseless fratricide that has been tearing Afghanistan apart must come to end. The main responsibility for settling their differences falls, first and foremost, on the warring parties. All the international community can do in this regard is help and support their political will. To this end, my country stands ready to do all it can. Inspired by the close historical and cultural bonds between Turkey and Afghanistan, we will continue to shoulder our responsibility for promoting peace and prosperity in that country.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Representative of Turkey for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Uzbekistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Mr. President, first of all let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month, and to express our conviction that the work of the Council under your presidency will be a success.

This open debate on the situation in Afghanistan is one of the links in this work and has provided a most valuable opportunity for the many interested delegations to express their views on the events unfolding in that country.

Today's examination of the situation in Afghanistan is not routine work for the Council; rather, it was dictated by concern at witnessing the situation there become more difficult. The Government of Uzbekistan welcomes the consistent efforts by the United Nations aimed at national reconstruction in Afghanistan.

The General Assembly resolutions adopted over the last few years, the frequent statements by the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General's reports on the situation in Afghanistan are testaments to these efforts. This is equally so of the latest report. We support the conclusions and recommendations it contains. We should like to express our profound gratitude to the

Secretary-General, for his personal, great efforts in the search for peace and national reconciliation in Afghanistan.

We should like to express our satisfaction at and support for the work of the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan headed by Mahmoud Mestiri in its efforts to mediate in that country. Even though the results of the Mission's efforts to carry out its assigned tasks are open to various interpretations, what is patently obvious and not open to doubt is one thing: the activities of the Mission are of extreme importance for achieving peace in Afghanistan, it should be encouraged in every way possible and the Council should take steps to bolster it further. We note with satisfaction the recent decision for the Special Mission to begin ongoing, practical activities actually inside Afghanistan itself, in Jalalabad.

The Government of Uzbekistan hopes that implementing the United Nations plan to restore peace and achieve national reconciliation in Afghanistan will, at the end of the day, bring peace to the peoples of that country. We are absolutely sure that the international community should take very seriously indeed the question of translating into reality the documents and statements on this issue that have been adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council. I should like to point in particular to the importance of implementing General Assembly resolution 50/88 of 19 December 1995, particularly operative paragraph 9 of its part B, which calls for an end to the supply to the parties of weapons and of equipment to make them.

In this connection, we would once again like to recall the appeals made to the Security Council by the President of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Islam Karimov, during the forty-eighth and fiftieth sessions of the General Assembly. Please allow me to quote here from his address to the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations:

> "We believe that the conflict in Afghanistan could be settled, first of all, by eliminating the interference of external forces (...) We appeal once again to the Security Council to impose an embargo on the supply of arms to Afghanistan, irrespective of its source." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 40th meeting, p. 13)*

That idea is being supported by a growing number of countries, as we can see at numerous meetings and talks at various levels. We are aware of the enormous difficulties connected with the practical implementation of that decision. However, we feel that there is increased awareness of the need to achieve peace in Afghanistan, not only by implementing measures within that country but also by fulfilling the obligations undertaken by all countries of the world community. Only through collective efforts on the part of the international community will it be possible to put an end to the war in Afghanistan, and all countries must comply with their obligations in that respect.

We all must focus our attention on the report of the Secretary-General, on the statements made here and on the idea of holding an international conference on the question of Afghanistan under United Nations auspices. Only through the collective efforts of the international community will it be possible to put an end to the war in Afghanistan, and only by ending the war there can we begin to hope for security in all the Central Asian region.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Uzbekistan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Tajikistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): First of all, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We are convinced that your wealth of diplomatic experience will allow the Security Council to carry out with honour the very important tasks facing it in the maintenance of international peace and security. We would like also to pay tribute to Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana for his very skilful and effective guidance of the work of the Council in March.

In the Republic of Tajikistan, there is a very acute awareness that the situation emerging in Afghanistan constitutes a threat to international peace in the region. That incredibly bitter conflict has gone on for many years. During that time, the factions involved in the conflict have made wide and indiscriminate use of heavy weaponry against populated areas, including the capital, Kabul. They have laid mines, causing casualties among civilians, including women, children and the elderly.

In this poor, undeveloped country, the conflict has almost completely destroyed the health-care system,

severed communications and disrupted the provision of essential foodstuffs, power and water. There have been outbreaks of dangerous diseases and epidemics. In sum, the situation, with no exaggeration whatsoever, could be characterized as a humanitarian tragedy. That is the very sad picture we see when we study the very comprehensive report on Afghanistan submitted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

This is why the international community, and first and foremost the United Nations and its Security Council, must undertake the most vigorous measures to induce the Afghan parties to the conflict to cease hostilities and to promote the prompt settlement of the conflict by peaceful means.

The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has every reason to express great concern at what is taking place in Afghanistan. Afghanistan and Tajikistan have rich, long-standing historical ties. The people of Tajikistan have great respect and sympathy for the Afghan people and empathize with their pain and their tragedy. At the same time, we cannot but be alarmed that in a country where the conflict rages on an ever greater scale, narcotic drugs are being produced without controls and are being distributed and transported through the territory of a number of States. This was confirmed by the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 1995.

The illegal arms trade is continuing as well. We are especially concerned over the fact that from several regions of Afghanistan, armed attacks are being launched across the Tajik-Afghan border. In that context, I should like to recall that the Security Council took a decision to open up in Taloqan, in northern Afghanistan, a United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) communications centre. However, that decision has not yet been implemented.

The international community understands that the persistence of the situation in and around Afghanistan is unacceptable. Various proposals have been put forward for future steps. In particular, the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan believes it essential to set up a contact group along the lines of the one for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ideas have been put forward on an arms embargo and on convening an international conference on Afghanistan. It would seem that there is a rational core in these ideas. However, what is of primary importance, in our view, is to make the most effective use of the already existing mechanism: the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. It is equally important and urgent to require the warring parties to the conflict to cease hostilities immediately and declare a moratorium on the use of armed force. That demand should be made of all Afghan factions.

At the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, said:

> "We call upon the international community to promote the earliest return of peace to this long-suffering land. Overcoming the Afghan crisis requires not only the constructive participation of States in the region, but also effective action by the United Nations." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 40th meeting, p. 25)*

The Republic of Tajikistan is prepared, together with members of the world community, to make its own contribution to the attainment of that goal.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Tajikistan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Thanarajasingam (Malaysia): I would like to express my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April. Your diplomatic skills and wisdom will no doubt ensure a successful conclusion to the deliberations of the Council.

I would also like to record my delegation's deep appreciation to Ambassador Legwaila of Botswana for his able stewardship of the Council for the month of March.

My delegation welcomes your initiative, Mr. President, for the Council to have an open discussion on the question of Afghanistan. Malaysia has maintained that it is important for the international community to continue to be involved in Afghanistan until a concrete and durable solution to the problem in that country is found.

The people of Afghanistan deserve peace, stability and development in their country. We are concerned at the worsening humanitarian situation as a result of the

continued fighting among the various groups and the blockade of Kabul, as stated in the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan.

Malaysia had hoped that, following the withdrawal of the former Soviet Union from Afghanistan, peace and normalcy would return to that country. Regrettably the conflict has continued, bringing in its wake immense destruction and misery for the Afghan people. The loss of lives and limbs and the various forms of hardship faced by the Afghan people are certainly uncalled for at a time when many parts of the world continue to benefit from the fruits of peace and socio-economic development.

The continued rejection by the various Afghan factions of the peace proposals initiated by the international community has dampened the prospects for an early solution to the conflict. Malaysia therefore considers it critical that all Afghan factions involved in the present conflict settle their differences amicably and early. They need to collectively ensure the success of the peace process to bring about an independent, united and sovereign Afghanistan. It is our desire to see Afghanistan take its rightful place in the international community and contribute towards efforts to promote peace, security and development.

While maintaining the need for concerted efforts — and, indeed actions — by the international community to bring peace and normalcy to Afghanistan, Malaysia is concerned at the rapid escalation of foreign interference in that country, as reported by the Secretary-General. The involvement of foreign elements in Afghanistan remains an obstacle to a peaceful settlement.

We share the view that national reconciliation and reconstruction would be facilitated in Afghanistan through the establishment of a fully representative and broad-based authoritative council. Through such a council, hopefully, all the feuding factions could eventually work for national reconciliation, which would bring about urgently needed peace and stability in Afghanistan. As a first step, the warring parties need to end the senseless shedding of the blood of innocent civilians and agree to abide by an unconditional and durable cease-fire.

Malaysia would welcome any proposal to convene an international conference to address the Afghan problem. However, we should bear in mind that only the full cooperation of all the Afghan factions and full support from the international community can ensure the success of such a conference. In this regard, too, we recognize that countries in the region could make important and useful contributions.

The President (interpretation from Spanish): I thank the representative of Malaysia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of India. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Shah (India): I am very happy to see you assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of April, Sir. I would like to join previous speakers in paying compliments to you and tribute to your predecessor as President of the Council.

I would also like to thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts with you, and the other Members of the Council, on the situation in a friendly country in our neighbourhood.

The Secretary-General in his latest report has referred to his appeal for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Afghanistan. In this troubled land, the primary need is for an unconditional cease- fire and immediate cessation of hostilities. That should be the principal objective of all efforts by the United Nations to bring peace to Afghanistan. Only when hostilities end will there be a reasonable chance for a peaceful dialogue to commence. The Special Mission of the United Nations has appealed for a cease-fire, and my delegation hopes that Ambassador Mestiri will continue to work towards achievement of a cease-fire as the immediate objective of the Special Mission.

The Secretary-General has also stated in his report that foreign interference is a massive obstacle to peace. The fact of outside interference has been recognised by the Security Council itself, most recently in its presidential statement dated 15 February 1996. That statement also called upon all States to prevent the flow to the Afghan parties of weapons and other supplies that can fuel the fighting. For his part, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan has repeatedly brought to the attention of the Security Council instances of blatant interference, and of the supply of arms to rebels by a neighbouring country. Security Council document S/1996/151, dated 1 March 1996, a letter from the Afghan Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, clearly identifies the source of outside interference and support

for the rebel forces, and asks the Security Council to put an end to it.

In the statement of the President of the Security Council issued on 15 February, the Council expressed its serious concern that the continuing conflict in Afghanistan provides a fertile ground for terrorism, arms transfers and drug trafficking, which destabilises the whole region and beyond. The spread of terrorism in our region and beyond is a matter of deep concern to my country, which has been a principal victim of State-supported terrorism and its export across our borders. It is essential, therefore, that the main focus of United Nations peace efforts in Afghanistan be the cessation of hostilities, and prevention of foreign interference and outside support for rebel forces.

There is also the related problem of the illicit traffic of arms and narcotics by criminal elements, which causes instability in the region. There are ominous signs that the cultivation of opium and the smuggling of narcotics out of Afghanistan are now being organized as a means for some groups to raise resources to purchase arms and spread terror. If this trend is not arrested, we risk the danger not only of a further intensification of armed conflict within Afghanistan, but also of strengthening international terrorist activity and the forging of new international criminal networks.

The conflict in Afghanistan has created a humanitarian problem of gargantuan proportions. The massive loss of human life and the serious damage to the economic and social infrastructure in that country have been graphically documented. The suffering of the Afghan people has far exceeded the bounds of even extreme human tolerance. Their suffering is hard to describe; it is so pervasive that one is left wondering in amazement how these innocent people can continue to exist with any semblance of normalcy. The latest report of the United States Government entitled "Global Humanitarian Emergencies 1996" lists Afghanistan at the very top of those countries facing the most severe current humanitarian crises. It confirms that humanitarian conditions worsened during 1995. Most significantly, it notes that in 1995 only 44 per cent of United Nations appeals for humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan were covered. This compares with the overall 71 per cent response.

This is most unfortunate and untenable. We cannot forget or ignore the humanitarian and development needs of Afghanistan. While the United Nations continues to work for a cease-fire and an end to foreign interference, the international community should mobilize the requisite assistance for the Afghan people with the same vigour and dedication with which it has approached similar tasks in other situations.

India's relations with Afghanistan are historical and longstanding. India stands for a united, stable, independent and non-aligned Afghanistan. We oppose all foreign interference and intervention in the internal affairs of that country.

We continue to be seriously concerned about the welfare of the Afghan people. In spite of our resource constraints, we have made our own modest contribution towards assistance for the people of Afghanistan. India's assistance is and always has been of a humanitarian and developmental nature. It is regrettable and unpardonable that there are some who should know better but continue to suggest otherwise.

The crisis in Afghanistan has several dimensions which automatically, in turn, also define the role that the United Nations must play in resolving that crisis. The objectives are clearly spelt out in General Assembly resolution 50/88. The cessation of hostilities and the termination of foreign interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan must be its most urgent task. Humanitarian assistance must be rushed to all parts of Afghanistan and in particular to the long-suffering people of Kabul. The United Nations must draw up a comprehensive plan of assistance for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan that will have to be implemented as soon as peace returns there.

I trust that the outcome of this open debate will help the Council and the Secretary-General to focus on what must be urgently done in Afghanistan with a view to restoring peace and stability and promoting development in that country.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of India for his kind words to me.

There are no further speakers on my list. However, the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan has asked to make a brief statement. I now call on him.

Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan): I should like to begin by expressing this brief concluding statement, on behalf of the Afghan people and Government, appreciation to all those who have taken part in the open debate on the situation in my country, Afghanistan. Today's debate has magnified the deep concern of the

international community in general and the Security Council in particular about the prevailing problems in our country. The debate has also exemplified a genuine desire to search for ways and means of achieving an end to the "nonsense" conflict in Afghanistan. This desire is in accord with the deep enthusiasm of the Afghan people to see an end to the fighting. Our people has indeed suffered enormously and wishes to cherish the fruits of peace.

However, looking deeply into the root causes of the conflict may bring one to the conclusion that sometimes we actually face no other alternative than to fight for peace. Of course, putting an end to the foreign interference would leave no reason for the conflict to continue. It is true that, with the discontinuation of interference, the sides involved in the conflict would be one step closer to reaching an accord that would once again enable them to stand side by side and jointly strive to rebuild their war-ravaged country.

This leads me to recall a consensus, exemplified in the course of today's open debate, that seems to exist on the discontinuation of foreign interference, a consensus which is a matter of satisfaction to my delegation.

Ideas have also been floated on ways and means that an international effort could pursue to put an end to the conflict. Some may deserve consideration, while others need to be further clarified so that the people of Afghanistan can rest assured that, in any international initiative for their good, consideration of the will of the Afghan people is paramount. It should be underscored that only a process in which the people are involved would guarantee a lasting, durable and comprehensive peaceful political solution.

Let me state for the sake of the record that the Afghan Government is ready to listen to and discuss any practical proposal that may be forwarded by the Special Mission. Ambassador Mestiri, in view of the valuable experience he has gained during the past two years, deserves to be supported in his endeavours to carry out the mandate entrusted to him by the General Assembly.

The Mission's headquarters was recently moved inside Afghanistan to the eastern city of Jalalabad. This is a positive step; however, the office's moving to the capital, Kabul, would contribute to improving the situation there by discouraging the random rocket attacks on that city. For the Council's further information, there are many embassies open in Kabul, and Ambassadors of friendly countries head their diplomatic missions there.

We have heard the appeals of speakers, on behalf of their Governments, to the conflicting sides. We assure the Council that these appeals will reach the parties. However, as far as the Government is concerned, we are only trying to defend the innocent inhabitants of Kabul and State sovereignty, to be transferred to a legitimate and credible, nationally-oriented body capable of improving the situation, a mechanism to be created — as was rightly stated by the representative of Japan — as a result of a genuine inter-Afghan dialogue which would represent the aspirations of the Afghan nation, including the warring sides.

I am deeply grateful to those who spoke today and expressed the utmost sympathy and solidarity with the Afghan people in their hour of trial. I just hope that our common efforts will soon generate a genuine Afghan political will in an environment free of foreign meddling, so that all sides may move on and enter into the second stage of their struggle: the struggle for Afghanistan's reconstruction.

I would like very briefly to refer to the statement made by the representative of Pakistan. As we have explained in the course of the debate in the General Assembly and in the course of today's debate, our disapproval of the Pakistani attitude is echoed by a wide range of frustration within Pakistan at the unhealthy policy pursued towards Afghanistan by some quarters, especially Pakistani military intelligence. Those objections have been well expressed by high-ranking Pakistani officials, members of Parliament, senators, politicians, writers and others who truly understand the value of Afghanistan's friendship.

His Excellency the representative of Pakistan wished to hear the "true voice" of the Afghans before the Council. This only represents an unwillingness on the part of the Pakistani Government to establish friendly relations with Afghanistan and to serve as a positive element for the restoration of peace and stability in its neighbouring country, Afghanistan. What we heard today did not after all seem to be in harmony with what we heard as recently as this morning from Islamabad. Perhaps this only justifies our finding that the Pakistani Government lacks a State policy with regard to Afghanistan and that there are many sides in the Pakistani Administration with different voices, according to their group interests and likings.

His Excellency the representative of Pakistan said that Pakistan was not interfering in the current conflict in

Afghanistan. Owing to the magnitude of Pakistani influence on a number of Afghan factions, especially Taliban, we believe that Pakistan's interference, if it were on the side of peace and the facilitation of national reconciliation, would be welcome by Afghanistan.

Once again references were made to who is controlling what part of the country. As a victim of foreign interference, I will not try to explain the situation inside Pakistan, particularly in Karachi — seven independent agencies in northern Pakistan, in Malakand, and so forth — fearing that this would be construed as interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. As far as the representative of Pakistan's references to legitimacy are concerned, these are only justified if the Pakistani delegation is representing the views of the Afghan opposition. They can continue to do so, but not from the rostrum of the United Nations.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): There are no further speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.